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THIS WEEK'S FORUM: PAGE 25

EDUCATION WEEK

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Business Tax Revolt In Michigan Poses Threat to Schools

Top Firms Are Challenging Plants' Assessed Values

By Tom Mirga

Following the lead of the Ford Motor Company, a number of other Fortune 500 companies have challenged their tax assessments in Michigan in a move that could cost the state's school districts millions of dollars.

The list includes some of the most familiar names in American business: Amway, Chrysler Corporation, Dow Chemical, Du Pont, General Motors, Steelcase, Strohs, Uniroyal, Unisys, UpJohn, and Warner-Lambert. And their actions have prompted scores of smaller companies throughout the state to follow suit, observers say.

The Michigan Tax Information Council, a nonprofit research group, reports that more than 1,400 property-tax appeals had been filed with the state tax tribunal as of March 31. General Motors alone has filed nearly 30 such appeals, disputing a total of $460 million in property assessments in 14 communities.

According to school and business officials, the recession that ravaged the state's economy in the late 1970's and early 1980's, combined with increased competition in the world market, forced Michigan's leading businesses to take a closer look at ways to cut costs. [illegible]d with increasing frequency, those officials say, the companies are cast-

Continued on Page 22

Chapter 1 Assistance 'Properly Targeted,' House Study Finds

By James Crawford

WASHINGTON—Chapter 1 compensatory education is reaching the children it was intended to serve, contrary to assertions by Secretary of Education William J. Bennett, according to a new Congressional staff report.

"The program is properly targeted to high-poverty schools and the lowest-achieving students in those schools," said Representative Augustus F. Hawkins of California, chairman of the House subcommittee on elementary, secondary, and vocational education, in releasing the study last week. "So the most disadvantaged are being served."

In fiscal 1988 budget documents, the Education Department argued that under Chapter 1, "many children receive services who are neither poor nor educationally deprived. . . . Of the Chapter 1 students receiving mathematics instruction, for example, only 40 percent come from poor homes; about 20 percent scored above the 50th percentile."

Continued on Page 17

'Shelter Kids'

Homeless Children Posing Special Problems For Educators, Policymakers, Social Workers

By Kirsten Goldberg and William Montague

At school, the other students call them "shelter kids."

They are the new homeless, moving with their parents from shelter to shelter and from school to school, sometimes missing classes for months at a time, sometimes dropping out altogether.

"The realization that there are large numbers of homeless children is a recent phenomenon," says Lisa K. Mihaly, a spokesman for the Children's Defense Fund, a Washington-based advocacy group. "The image of the homeless as being exclusively middle-aged bag ladies or skid-row bums is no longer valid."

Yet only recently have policymakers begun to address the complicated mixture of problems, including education, that homeless children face, according to advocates for the homeless.

And those who have undertaken the task say that the legal and ethical questions involved can be formidable. They include not only questions of jurisdictional responsibility and educational equity, but also, in some cases, the rights of homeless parents to keep their families intact.

Such questions may surface later this month in Congressional hearings, as federal lawmakers consider a proposed $450-million aid package for the homeless. Among the legislation's provisions is a requirement that state education agencies develop comprehensive plans for educating homeless children.

Though there is general agreement in the Congress that the problems of the homeless must be addressed, the measure is running into stiff opposition from major education groups, who say the proposals contain harsh sanctions that would do more harm than good.

Advocates for the homeless, on the other hand, have strongly endorsed the legislation, which, they say, would ensure

Continued on Page 20

'Dumping Ground' or Last Chance?

Experts Divided on Alternative Schools

By Debra Viadero

Shawn Lettau's behavior had earned him the label of truant and troublemaker in the Anne Arundel County, Md., schools. And after repeated suspensions, the 14-year-old was given a choice: Either attend an "alternative school" for disruptive students or be expelled.

He chose the alternative school, a place called the Learning Center in Annapolis, and now he earns top grades while dreaming of a good job after graduation.

"It's the best thing that's happened to me since I've been in school," he says.

But Huntley J. Cross, the center's director, remembers a time when success stories like Shawn's were the exception, rather than the rule.

When he came to the school 13 years ago, Mr. Cross says, it was "somewhat of a dumping ground," lumping together the emotionally disturbed, those prone to bad grades and misbehavior, and the seriously delinquent.

Other educators claim that at too many of such discipline-based alternative schools, that situation may still be the case.

In an era of magnet schools and other options, the traditional notion of placing problem students in non-voluntary alternative programs for special attention has gained new momentum nationwide. But because of widely varying program quality, not all experts consider the development a positive one.

"Simply taking kids out of one setting and placing them in another, arbitrary setting doesn't do them any good," explains Denise Gottfredson, a University of Maryland researcher who, five years ago, helped

Continued on Page 16

Broader Focus Said Key to Next Wave Of Reform Drive

New Study, Leaders Agree Public Must Be Won Over

By William Snider

CHICAGO—The school-reform movement has succeeded in raising student achievement in high school, but without more progress in professionalizing teaching and improving instruction in the early grades, such gains may be jeopardized by a return to "benign neglect," a major new study released last week concludes.

The book-length report, *". . . the best of educations": Reforming America's Public Schools in the 1980's*, examines the reform process to date, concentrating on seven states: California, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, South Carolina, Texas, and Washington. It is the result of a two-year study commissioned by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

At a conference here coinciding with the report's release, a group of prominent educators and business leaders convened by the Education Commission of the States generally agreed with the report's conclusions on what the essential elements of the "second wave" of reform should be.

And they were in agreement with the new study in warning that the second wave may never arrive, unless the public is convinced that the energy and money expended thus far have been worthwhile and that further efforts are needed.

Americans are an "impatient people," said Gov. James Thompson of Illinois, one of those attending the E.C.S. conference. "They want to know what we have done with their money."

The commission's executive director, Frank Newman, agreed. "The toughest part lies ahead," he said. "We're moving into a period of increasing subtlety" that will make reform more difficult to explain and sell to voters and politicians.

The economic problems of many states also threaten reforms, the conference participants said. They rejected U.S. Secretary of Education William J. Bennett's assertion, made most recently in an April 5 speech to the Education Writers' Association, that school reform can be accom-

Continued on Page 18

Also in the news

Tests Discriminate Against Girls, Study Says
Because college-admissions tests are "sex biased," young women lose millions of dollars in scholarship aid each year, and are denied access to leading institutions, a new report asserts.
5

Major Changes Continue At Catholic Schools
As more Catholic schools close and enrollment declines, the percentage of minority students and non-Catholics—most of them black—has risen dramatically since 1971.
9



Law To Aid Vaccine Victims Sparks Dispute
House Democrats and the Administration are at odds over how to solve the growing vaccination-liability crisis and how to compensate children who are injured by the immunizations.
12

IN SUMMARY

A Matter of Perspective
American students are more pessimistic than Soviet teen-agers about their economic prospects and the possibility of nuclear war, according to a survey of students in both countries. **Story on Page 7.**

A Coalition for Change
In Boston, Mayor Raymond L. Flynn and other civic leaders are calling for an overhaul of the city's school system to improve its performance and increase educators' accountability. **Story on Page 9.**

Better Late Than Never
After a delay that may force some school districts to borrow money to cover current expenses, the New York legislature has increased the state's education budget for the fifth straight year. **Story on Page 10.**

Home From the Holiday
Members of the Congress are returning from their Easter recess this week to confront a growing legislative agenda, including bills that would have a substantial impact on education. **Story on Page 12.**

One Down, One To Go
Pleased with the fiscal 1988 budget adopted this month by the House, education lobbyists are trying to persuade the Senate to approve a similar spending blueprint. **Story on Page 14.**

I.R.S. Signals Retreat
Officials of the Internal Revenue Service have said they may withdraw all or part of a controversial proposal that would greatly curtail the political activities of nonprofit groups. **Story on Page 14.**

Colleges	15	Honors	26
Commentary	23 & 32	Letters	24
Databank	18	Marketplace	27
Events	26	Special Education	4
Federal File	12	State Capitols	10

FORUM
"Teacher Education Programs: A Commitment for Cooperation." Education Commission of the States.
Statement on Page 25

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THE WEEK

NATIONAL

Fortune 500 Executives Call Schools Deficient

American business executives believe that deficiencies in mathematics, science, English, and basic skills are responsible for the United States' declining competitiveness in the world market, a survey of Fortune 500 executives has found.

Some 88 percent of the research-and-development executives surveyed said there were deficiencies in the U.S. educational system. Asked to identify those shortcomings, 30 percent cited students' poor ability in math, science, and English at the secondary and college levels, and 23 percent said poor basic education at the elementary-school level.

The executives also said the high quality of the Japanese and West German educational systems was a major reason why those countries have made technological gains.

In addition, a majority of the respondents said the United States' technological literacy rate was "very low," compared with those of other industrialized nations, and nearly 90 percent said that all citizens, not just those with technical talent, must be technologically literate.

The Opinion Research Corporation conducted the survey for the Waltham, Mass.-based GTE Laboratories Inc. It was released this month at the Boston Museum of Science at a ceremony marking National Science and Technology Week.

High-School Football Deaths Rose in 1986

The number of high-school football players who died as a result of participating in the sport nearly tripled in 1986 over the previous year, a new study has found.

Eleven high-school football players died last year, the highest total in a decade, researchers at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill reported this month. Four football players died as a result of competition in the 1985 season.

Also during the 1986 season, six players died from causes indirectly related to football, including heart attacks following exertion. Only one player died under similar circumstances the previous year.

"If [the deaths] continue to climb, we'll have to look at how coaches are teaching blocking and tackling once again, and also look at the standards for football helmets," said Frederick O. Mueller, a professor of physical education and the study's principal researcher. Of the 12 deaths that occurred in high-school and college football last year, 9 were the result of head injuries, he noted.

The study was based on information from the National Federation of State High School Associations, the National Collegiate Athletic Association, and about 150 people nationwide who monitor sports accidents.

STATES

Education School Sued By Graduate Over Grade

A 24-year-old teacher has sued the University of Delaware on the grounds that an unfair D grade prevented her from receiving a state teaching certificate until two years after she had graduated.

Christine Paoli of Newark, Del., argues in the suit, filed in U.S. District Court, that her former professor, Anne McCourt-Lewis, was biased against her.

She also alleges that the college failed to inform her of procedures designed to mediate grade disputes and to appeal grade decisions.

Ms. Paoli currently teaches at St. Anthony's School, a private elementary school in Wilmington, Del., that does not require its instructors to have a state teaching certificate. Her suit seeks both compensatory and punitive damages from the university.

Barbara D. Crowell, a lawyer for Ms. McCourt-Lewis and the university, last week denied Ms. Paoli's allegations.

She said Ms. Paoli was given "full due-process procedures."

According to Ms. Crowell, the former student received two full hearings before panels of both students and faculty members, and was subsequently evaluated by another professor, who also gave her a D.

143 District Budgets Rejected in New Jersey

School budgets in 143 districts were rejected by New Jersey voters this month, but local officials said the budget disputes should be resolved in time to plan for the next academic year.

Frank Belluscio, a spokesman for the New Jersey School Boards Association, said that 74.1 percent of the 553 school budgets on the ballot were approved by voters, down from 82.4 percent last year. Voters in the state's largest city, Newark, were among those rejecting budgets.

Mr. Belluscio said the large number of rejections may be attributable to a projected $89.4-million shortfall in state aid to local districts. He said the deficit may have forced some districts to raise property taxes to higher-than-normal levels to make up the difference. He added that the shortfall had hit school transportation budgets particularly hard.

Rejected school budgets are referred to municipal governments, which have until April 28 to amend or approve them, the spokesman said. School boards can then appeal any cuts to the state commissioner of education.

"The voters have essentially said, 'We want another group of elected officials to look at the budget,' " Mr. Belluscio said.

DISTRICTS

Strike Ruled a Lockout; Teachers Entitled to Pay

In a unanimous decision, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court has ruled that Philadelphia teachers who participated in a 50-day strike at the beginning of the 1981-82 school year were actually locked out by the city school district and are entitled to unemployment compensation.

The decision, which upholds a 1985 Commonwealth Court ruling, will cost the district up to $18 million, according to J. William Jones, a district spokesman.

Under the ruling, approximately 18,000 teachers and other employees represented by the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers at the time of the strike are entitled to compensation, Mr. Jones said.

The union, an affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers, had argued that the strike was actually a lockout because the district had reneged on contract obligations by withholding a 10 percent negotiated pay increase.

The state's highest court agreed. "To deny unemployment-compensation benefits," the ruling states, "would make illusory the agreements made by public employees in this commonwealth as a result of their good-faith bargaining."

The district will accept the court's decision and pay the unemployment claims, Mr. Jones said.

"We can afford it now," he noted, "but it will make our projected deficit for 1988-89 that much larger."

Injuries Seen in Wake Of Yonkers Busing Plan

Concerned about student injuries that have occurred since the start of court-ordered busing last fall, officials of the Yonkers, N.Y., school system are launching a traffic-safety campaign aimed at local motorists.

Since September, five children have been hit by cars failing to stop for school buses, resulting in minor injuries, according to the district's superintendent of schools, Donald Batista.

Under the school-desegregation plan, the number of children in Yonkers being transported to and from school by bus has increased from

Tests' Sex Bias Costs Women Millions In College Assistance, Group Asserts

By Lynn Olson

Young women lose millions of dollars in college scholarships each year as a result of sex bias in admissions tests that are widely used in making such awards, argues a report released last week.

"These tests are supposed to predict future academic performance," said Phyllis Rosser, the principal author of the study by the National Center for Fair & Open Testing, or FairTest. "Yet, girls earn better grades than boys in both high school and college, but score lower on standardized tests."

"The more these biased exams are used as gatekeepers for college admission and scholarship aid," she contended, "the more discrimination young women suffer."

For example, the report says, of the approximately 15,500 semifinalists competing for National Merit Scholarships this year, 61 percent are men and 35 percent are women. More men than women are semifinalists in every state except Hawaii and Montana, according to FairTest's calculations.

National Merit semifinalists are chosen on the basis of their scores on the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test. Because women generally score lower than men on the P.S.A.T., they are less likely to become contenders for the prestigious awards, FairTest says.

The advocacy group identified the sex of the semifinalists from a list of their names. It was unable to determine the sex of approximately 4.3 percent of the competitors.

The group also reports that in 1985-86, girls received only 36 percent of the National Merit Scholarships, while men received 64 percent. That year, it notes, some 643,000 women took the P.S.A.T., compared with 537,000 men. The sex of approximately 1,000 additional test-takers was not identified.

In addition to the National Merit Scholarship Corporation, more than 800 other private and government scholarship agencies rely at least partially on admissions tests to select winners, according to the study, "Sex Bias in College-Admissions Tests: Why Women Lose Out."

Scholarship Group Responds

FairTest's charges drew a quick response from Marianne Roderick, senior vice president for the nonprofit organization that provides more than $23 million in National Merit awards to students each year. Some 670 corporations, foundations, professional organizations, colleges, and universities sponsor the scholarships.

Ms. Roderick stressed that, while P.S.A.T. scores are used to select semifinalists, the organization also considers a wide range of other criteria in making the awards, including students' academic records, extracurricular activities, intended college majors, leadership potential, and recommendations of their school principals.

"Because the test scores of all finalists in the merit program are very similar and very high," she said, "the other factors really become more important in choosing the scholarship winners."

Ms. Roderick said the P.S.A.T. is used as an initial screening device because it is readily available to all interested students and allows them to enter the competition on the same basis.

But she admitted that in the past few years the annual pool of approximately 15,000 semifinalists has been about 60 percent male.

Ms. Roderick declined to address the charge that the P.S.A.T. is biased against female students. That question, she said, should be asked of the Educational Testing Service, which produces the test.

"We are not in the testing business," she said. "What we operate is a scholarship competition."

Not Biased

Fred Moreno, assistant director of public affairs for the College Board, which contracts with the E.T.S. to produce both the P.S.A.T. and the Scholastic Aptitude Test, said, "Fundamentally, we don't think the [P.S.A.T.] is biased."

There is a difference in how men and women score on both the P.S.A.T. and the S.A.T., he said, "but we don't know all the answers and reasons why."

For example, he noted, "at least in terms of the math section, we know that women tend to take less math and science courses in high school than men do, and that could have an effect on their math scores."

Mr. Moreno added: "There are some 1.2 million P.S.A.T. takers who are applicants for National Merit Scholarships. It would be impossible for [the National Merit Scholarship Corporation] to look at the portfolios of 1.2 million people."

He said an analysis by the E.T.S. had found that using the P.S.A.T. as an initial screen for the scholarships did not appear to be hurting students. Scholarship winners, he noted, are judged on a wide variety of measures, "and boys still wind up getting more scholarships" than do girls.

According to FairTest, the proportion of female National Merit scholars has decreased in the past three years. In 1985-86, of the 6,026 scholarships awarded, 36 percent went to women, compared with 38 percent in 1984-85 and 40 percent in 1983-84.

Its report includes a state-by-state breakdown of this year's National Merit semifinalists by sex; a list of corporations that give special merit scholarships administered by the National Merit Scholarship Corporation; and a list of other scholarships awarded, at least in part, on the basis of college-admissions-test scores.

Extensive Use

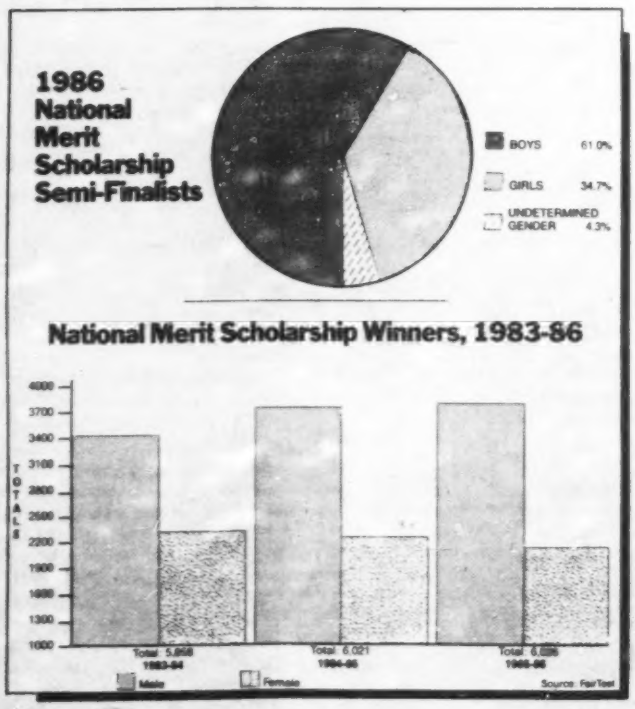
The FairTest study also maintains that widespread use of college-admissions tests—including the S.A.T. and the American College Testing program examination—denies women access to competitive universities and college-preparatory programs.

According to the report, more than 1,000 colleges and universities require that scores on college-admissions tests be submitted before they will consider an applicant.

FairTest lists nearly 300 accredited colleges and universities that it says rely heavily on test scores in making admissions decisions.

In addition, FairTest reports that a number of special high-school programs for the "gifted and talented" use college-admissions scores to select participants.

> ***"The more these biased exams are used as gatekeepers for . . . scholarship aid, the more discrimination young women suffer."***
>
> *—Phyllis Rosser, principal author of FairTest study*



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